

IRRITING TIMES IN FRANCE.

SEE SPEECH THAT BROUGHT AN OBSCURE MAN TO THE FRONT.

Butter that Cavignac's speech and resolution have founded the boom of the Ministry—Popular District of the Government—A feeling that Ribot's sentence is not severe enough—Nobody knows what will happen if the Chamber is dissolved.

PARIS, Feb. 11.—The swiftness with which the whole aspect of things in the French political kaleidoscope often change has been illustrated two or three times this week. We have seen a man unnoticed during all the turmoil of the past three months suddenly hailed as the savior of society and the future President of the republic because of one clever speech in the Chamber of Deputies. We have heard an angry chorus of public indignation over the failure to punish an offender at the same session. There have been honest men engaged in the investigations. Magistrate Franquville, for instance, splendidly upheld the standard of relentless and incorruptible French justice. Ribot's Ministers protest that they are in no way responsible for the action of the Chamber of Deputies in acquitting the accused. The Chamber of Deputies, for its part, has been protesting. The fact that men whose power is to be feared go free, while those whose influence is gone are punished, cannot be reconciled in the public mind, especially when the admitted evidence against the accused is regarded as a confession of guilt.

The storm of popular anger which greeted the news of the dismissal of the charges against Ribot, Grévy, and other public men early in the week, must have amazed President Carnot and Prime Minister Ribot. If they thought the Chamber of Deputies would so far forget that it would receive such a decision with only ordinary grumbling, they were undeceived. If they expected that the exasperation would be allayed by the sentences of Thursday, they know better now. The Ribot Ministry remains in power only because it has no alternative. It is a government of necessity, and it is a government of necessity.

The events in the Chamber on Wednesday when Cavignac delivered the speech which has suddenly made him the most important man in France are capable of two interpretations. The speech and resolution which accompanied it were undoubtedly a blow to the Government policy. If, however, nothing more should follow his protestations of vigorous virtue, the whole episode might be construed as an attempt of the much accused Chamber to whitewash itself. Time alone will make this point clear. The prevailing opinion is that the Chamber of Deputies is a "psychological moment," but no one would raise himself from obscurity to prominence, but that he has done the present Ministry.

It is hardly possible, however, that Ribot's Cabinet will fall quite yet. Even its enemies recognize the necessity of the passage of the budget without a forcible delay. The direct attack upon the Chamber will be made for the first time in the Chamber until the really necessary routine work has been done. Nobody can guess what may happen any moment however. In the excitement of the unexpected situation which may arise when the present Ministry falls, we may expect that strong efforts will be made for the dissolution of the Chamber and an early general election.

If Cavignac should be Prime Minister, and it is conceded that he would have an opportunity to succeed to that position, his policy towards the Chamber of Deputies would be to make the real crisis of the Chamber the events of the last three weeks have been tending.

Exaggerated reports have been sent out about popular sympathy with the Panama prisoners who were sentenced on Thursday. It is a mistake to say that the sentence is regarded as a triumph. The Chamber in the case of Ferdinand de Lesseps. Even in the case of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the punishment falls to fit the crime. The only point raised is that his age, feebleness, and past achievements make it unjust to inflict this disgrace upon him, inasmuch as nobody believes that he would be a danger to the country.

The sympathy which many men have with him has no practical point to urge against the authorities. In the case of Eiffel, at least, public sentiment undoubtedly called for a heavier penalty than has been imposed.

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Herr Baumbach (Centrist) called Herr Bebel's oration a masterpiece of logic and eloquence, but the practical question how socialism could be introduced into the country was not touched. The debate was a diversion from the Army bill. Asked to define the socialist programme, he declared that the party made war upon abuses, and did not dream of organizing a brand-new political-social system.

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Pastor Stocker, replying to Herr Liebknecht, declared that the Socialists were far from achieving a triumph. They were, indeed, at the end of their resources. They were working under the most unfavorable conditions, and their theories and the worthless character of the leaders' professions.

The debate was attended with several exchanges of acrimonious language. On one occasion Herr Bebel, stung by the sarcasm of Herr Richter, jumped up and shouted: "If the citizens of our Socialist Reichstag do not obey me, I will force them to do so." "Ah," said Herr Richter, "you would force them to work under the penalty of death by starvation."

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